



Piedmont Health District

Serving the counties of Amelia, Buckingham,
Charlotte, Cumberland, Lunenburg, Nottoway, and Prince Edward

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Spotlight on Our Staff... Cynthia DeBusk, Assistant Director for Communicable Disease and Maternal and Child Health



I started my career in Public Health 20 years ago thanks to a wonderful lady and a great public health nurse, Sara Davis of Nottoway County.

I find the most challenging and rewarding aspects of public health nursing to be communicable disease control. Much of this work is "behind the lines", unseen by those we are protecting. Helping a person with an infection, such as tuberculosis, move from being a risk to others to becoming a productive member of the community is very rewarding in itself. However, it is equally rewarding to have prevented the spread of TB to friends, neighbors and others in the community.

Preventing the spread of communicable diseases by food handlers; in day cares, nursing homes, and schools; and searching for the source of outbreaks from Legionnaires' disease, *E. coli*, or other foodborne infections are critical aspects in keeping the citizens of our community healthy. Equally important are our preventive health activities such as adult and childhood immunizations that prevent unnecessary illness.

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October is Breast Cancer Awareness Month

Breast cancer is the most commonly diagnosed cancer in women and, after lung cancer, the number one cause of cancer death. One out of every 9 women will get breast cancer.

This year in Virginia, about 4,500 new cases of breast cancer will be found in women and about 1,000 will die of this disease.

A combination of breast exam (both by you and by your doctor) and mammogram is your best weapon to detect breast cancer early enough to be treated. Unfortunately, **only about one in three women gets appropriate routine screening.**

The chance of getting breast cancer goes up with age. **Before age 40, monthly breast self-examinations are a woman's best method of early detection. Once you turn forty, in addition to self-examinations you should receive annual breast exams by your doctor as well as mammograms every 1-2 years.**

Although all women are at risk for breast cancer, women at even higher risk include those who :

- Have a family history of breast cancer
- Had breast cancer before
- Had other types of breast problems
- Had their first baby after age 30

Medicare and private health insurance should pay for your mammogram. In addition, some places will adjust the charge according to your income ("sliding scale fee").

Free breast self-examination guides are available at your local health department.

Holiday Food Safety

Thanksgiving, Christmas, and New Years are times for us to share nice home cooked meals with our family and our friends.

Many of our favorite holiday foods, like turkey with stuffing, chitlins, and egg nog, though, are those most likely to make us sick if we are not very careful.

Last year, over 23 residents in our 7 county Health District were diagnosed with *Salmonella*, a bacterial infection that can cause fever, stomach cramps and diarrhea. Because many people with milder cases never even get tested by their doctor, the actual number of *Salmonella* infections each year is actually closer to 400 among our residents.

Raw or undercooked poultry, including turkey, chicken, and eggs, are a major cause of *Salmonella* infection. Additionally, if poultry juices mix with other foods, the *Salmonella* can then contaminate them too.

To survive and grow, bacteria need the right conditions: food to grow on, moisture, time, and room to warm temperatures.

During this upcoming holiday season, there are 4 main steps we can all take to make sure that the food we serve remains healthy and safe:

CLEAN: Always wash your hands with hot, soapy water both before and after you touch food and clean up all kitchen surfaces that come in contact with foods.

SEPARATE: Different foods are more likely to have different types of bacteria. Keeping poultry, raw meat, and seafood away from vegetables and fruits will help prevent their juices from mixing.

COOK: The best way to cut down the amount of bacteria in your food is to cook it thoroughly (whole chicken and turkey to 180F, other meat and fish to 165F). The best way to keep bacteria from regrowing is to keep hot foods hot (at least 140F) and cold foods cold (below 40F).

CHILL: Foods should only sit at room temperature up to 2 hours before either being refrigerated or thoroughly reheated.

TURKEY

As with other meats, **it is unsafe to defrost a turkey on the counter for more than 2 hours.**



There are, however, 3 safe ways of thawing out a turkey:

IN THE REFRIGERATOR: Allow about 24 hours for each 5 pounds of turkey.

IN THE MICROWAVE: Check with microwave instructions for times.

IN COLD WATER: Immerse the turkey in cold tap water, replacing the water every 30 minutes. Allow about 30 minutes per pound of turkey. Turkeys thawed in cold water should be cooked immediately.

The best way to make sure the turkey is done is by measuring a thigh temperature of 180F with a meat thermometer. The color of the meat is not a good indicator of doneness.

If you have not eaten all the turkey within 2 hours, slice it, remove the stuffing and either refrigerate or reheat the turkey slices to 165F. Cooked turkey can be stored in the refrigerator for up to 4 days, and stuffing and gravy up to 2 days.

STUFFING

In addition to making sure your turkey is safe, it is equally important to make sure the stuffing is also safe. **It is safest to cook your stuffing separately. If you do cook the stuffing in the turkey, these 4 steps will help keep you and your family healthy throughout the holidays:**

PREPARE STUFFING SAFELY: Although the wet and dry ingredients can be prepared ahead of time, the stuffing should be mixed just before it goes into the turkey or a casserole.

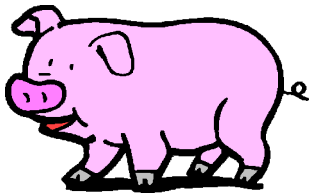
STUFF THE TURKEY LOOSELY: About $\frac{3}{4}$ cup stuffing per pound of turkey.

MAKE SURE ALL THE STUFFING HEATS TO 165F. Even when the turkey reaches 180F, the stuffing may not get to 165F, the safe temperature for cooking. It is important that the center of the stuffing reach at least 165F.

STORE LEFTOVER STUFFING IN THE REFRIGERATOR: Separate from the turkey within 2 hours of cooking. The stuffing can be eaten as leftovers within 4 days.

CHITLINS

Bacteria called *Yersinia* live in the intestines of pigs.



Although cooked chitterlings (chitlins) are safe to eat, **handling of raw chitlins can cause diarrhea, fever and stomach pains, particularly in small children.**

It is easy to avoid getting sick from chitlins by following these 5 simple steps:

USE PRE-COOKED CHITLINS OR PRE-BOIL THE CHITLINS in boiling water for 5 minutes before cleaning. This will kill off the bacteria. **Pre-boiling makes cleaning easier and faster and DOES NOT change the taste.**

CAREFULLY CLEAN UP all areas touched by the raw chitlins.

Then, **WASH YOUR HANDS CAREFULLY** with warm soap and water.

KEEP ALL CHILDREN OUT OF THE KITCHEN until the chitlins are pre-boiled and the kitchen is cleaned.

DO NOT REUSE ANY CONTAINER THAT HELD RAW CHITLINS until it has been thoroughly cleaned.

SALMONELLA-SAFE EGG NOG

Just like turkey, raw eggs can be a source of *Salmonella* infections. Most egg nog recipes call for raw eggs.

You can still enjoy your homemade egg nog by substituting pasteurized egg products (like Egg Beaters®) or by using a recipe that includes cooked eggs, such as this one from the American Egg Board (www.aeb.org):



INGREDIENTS:

6 eggs
 $\frac{1}{4}$ cup sugar
 $\frac{1}{4}$ teaspoon salt (optional)
1 quart milk, divided
1 teaspoon vanilla
Garnishes or stir-ins (optional), such as fruit juice, orange slices, chocolate curls, cinnamon sticks, candy canes, peppermint sticks, brandy, rum, whiskey or liqueur, extracts or flavorings, ground nutmeg, whipped cream, ice cream.

DIRECTIONS:

In large saucepan, beat together eggs, sugar, and salt. Stir in 2 cups of milk. Cook over low heat, stirring constantly, until mixture is thick enough to coat a metal spoon with a thin film and reaches at least 160F. Remove from heat. Stir in remaining 2 cups milk and vanilla. Cover and refrigerate until thoroughly chilled (several hours or overnight). Just before serving, pour into bowl or pitcher. Garnish or add stir-ins, if desired.

Serve immediately. Makes 1 $\frac{1}{2}$ quarts or 12 ($\frac{1}{2}$ -cup) servings.

More information on food safety can be found at the web sites of the Virginia Department of Health's Office of Epidemiology at <http://www.vdh.state.va.us/epi/salmf.htm> and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention at <http://www.cdc.gov>.

Adult Immunizations

Luckily, if we received all of our childhood immunizations, we probably won't ever need to be vaccinated as adults against measles, mumps, rubella (German measles), pertussis (whooping cough) or polio.

In addition, adults only need one booster shot every 10 years to keep us protected against **TETANUS AND DIPHTHERIA**.

HEPATITIS B AND VARICELLA (chickenpox) vaccines have been added to the list of routine childhood immunizations within the past 5 years. Adults who have not already had these infections may benefit from getting the immunizations.

Lastly, 2 immunizations are recommended to help prevent major causes of pneumonia in adults: **INFLUENZA (FLU) AND PNEUMOCOCCUS**.

For several weeks each winter, pneumonia and flu are the top killers in this country. Both immunizations are recommended for everyone over age 65 and for those with any chronic disease or lung problem, those in nursing homes, or those who live or work with the elderly.

The influenza virus continually changes, so it is important to get revaccinated each year, preferably between October and December. Most people only need to get the pneumococcal vaccine once in their lives, with those at higher risk getting revaccinated every 5-7 years.

Piedmont Health District
111 South Street, First Floor
Farmville, VA 23901
ADDRESS CORRECTION REQUESTED

Local Health Department Information

Piedmont Health District Office (804) 392-3984

David Goodfriend, MD, MPH, Director Ext: 131

e-mail: dgoodfriend@vdh.state.va.us

Amelia County	(804) 561-2711
Buckingham County	(804) 969-4244
Charlotte County	(804) 542-5251
Cumberland County	(804) 492-4661
Lunenburg County	(804) 696-2346
Nottoway County	(804) 645-7595
Prince Edward County	(804) 392-8187

Please Visit Us on the World Wide Web:

Virginia Department of Health: <http://www.vdh.state.va.us>

Piedmont Health District:
<http://www.vdh.state.va.us/lhd/piedmont.htm>

Immunization

Tetanus/diphtheria

Influenza

Pneumococcus

Frequency

Every 10 years

Annually after age 65

Usually once, after age 65

Also consider varicella and hepatitis B if at risk

For more information, contact your doctor or local health department. Information on adult and childhood vaccines can also be found at: <http://www.cdc.gov/nip/> and <http://www.vdh.state.va.us/imm/homepage.htm>.